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## THE GALLANT LITTLE *CAMPEADOR*



PENCIL SKETCH BY SIR MUIRHEAD BONE, ADMIRALTY ARTIST, DRAWN IN THE DECK CABIN OF *GAMPEADOR* I.  
(Left to right) Commander C. H. Davey, O.B.E., R.N. ; Lieutenant John R. Muir, R.N.V.R. ; Lieutenant Charles B. Turner, R.N.V.R.

*Exhibited at the National Gallery, 1940.*

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# THE GALLANT LITTLE *CAMPEADOR*

*by*  
CECIL HUNT

*With nine illustrations*

SECOND EDITION



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## FOREWORD

THE RECORD OF *Campeador's* service will eventually give a shining page to the official Naval record of the Auxiliary Patrol Service. With that record this short book would not presume to compete.

That history will tell of *Campeador's* reputation for remaining at her station during the most severe winter for generations, for refusing to return to port to remedy defects if they could possibly be remedied at sea. *Campeador* was at sea 84 days out of the first 95 days of the war.

But, as *The Times* said on 23 July 1940 : 'There was something unique about *Campeador*.' Of her four officers the youngest was aged 58, the oldest 67.

'These gallant gentlemen, by their fortitude and unabated cheerfulness, were a splendid example to everyone in the Portsmouth Command. . . . As they would have wished, they died together in the service of their country, but their example will for long remain an inspiration to the younger generation, and the little *Campeador* will be remembered and talked about, long after the war is over, by those who served in the same waters.'

It is my hope, therefore, that this short book may have its supplementary value, for in it is much personal material ; reflections and first-hand descriptions from men who contributed to *Campeador's* fame.



My difficulties have been considerable. Muir's letters to me from the ship were written without thought of publication. This book was not conceived until after her loss. There are only two survivors.

It is inevitable, therefore, that the narrative should be uneven in its detail. Of necessity, too, much of *Campeador's* activity was secret. Much more was monotonous in its repetition, though still vital service in the most severe conditions. I am conscious of the book's deficiencies, but it embodies much that would have otherwise been lost. It was too fine to lose.

The book has been a labour of love, a privilege of friendship. The royalties will be given to the Association of Retired Naval Officers, Empire House, Piccadilly, W., to further their admirable efforts on behalf of retired officers, their widows and dependants.

I acknowledge with gratitude the help of Mrs. D. Beard, London ; A. Vincent Bibbings, Esq., Newton Abbot ; Mrs. J. A. Cooke-Hurle, Newton Abbot ; Captain Taprell Dorling, D.S.O., R.N., London ; H. J. Hanson, Esq., O.B.E., London ; Captain Henry G. Hawker, Ermington ; Mrs. Vernon MacAndrew, Dartmouth ; Mrs. J. R. Muir, Paignton ; Messrs. Philip & Son, Ltd., Dartmouth ; B. Ryall, Esq., Plympton ; Commander A. D. D. Smyth, H.M.S. *Wilna* ; Mrs. C. E. Turner, Shankill, Co. Dublin ; G. Ellis Turner, Esq., Kingswear ; The *Western Morning News*, Plymouth ; Engineer-Lieutenant H. Yersin, Paignton.

CECIL HUNT

HIGHGATE, November, 1940

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## CHAPTER ONE

*'PROMOTE THEM, age will be served.'*

It was the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill, soon to become Premier, who wrote these characteristic words across a recommendation certificate.

The certificate recommended for promotion to Lieutenant, Sub-Lieutenant Vernon W. MacAndrew, R.N.V.R., and Sub-Lieutenant John R. Muir, R.N.V.R. Their ship was *Campeador V*, a motor yacht owned by Mr. V. W. MacAndrew and commissioned for patrol service soon after the outbreak of war in September, 1939, by Commander C. H. Davey, O.B.E. His third Sub-Lieutenant, R.N.V.R., was Mr. Charles E. Turner.

The youngest of these men was aged 58 and the oldest 67, yet the Captain of *Campeador V* felt justified in entering against the various qualities on the promotion form the highest marks permissible.

To understand the full significance of *Campeador V*, 'the gallant little *Campeador*' by which proud title she was soon known and honoured in the Auxiliary Patrol and in the Home Fleet, it is necessary to observe her officers and men. For the story of the *Campeador V* is essentially an epic of human endurance. That aspect of her record commands admiration, but her brief yet shining war record was more than a reflection

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of passive endurance. It was achieved only because in her officers and men was found seamanship of high order.

Indeed it is doubtful whether a little ship—for her tonnage was only 211 T.M.—ever enjoyed such a pooling of passionate devotion to the sea, such a diversity of wide experience and sea wisdom as was offered by her officers. There is, in their records, the very stuff of Britain's maritime supremacy. There are, too, those West Country qualities which have always adorned British seamanship in peace and war.

Vernon William MacAndrew, of Ravensbury, Dartmouth, was the owner of *Campeador V*. This fifth of the line of *Campeadors* was built by Messrs. Philip & Son, Ltd., Dartmouth, in 1938, from designs by Mr. Norman Hart, A.M.I.N.A. She was the first yacht to be driven by 16-cylinder engines, two Gleniffer vee-type Diesel units which developed a total of 640 h.p. at speed of 900 r.p.m. She was 126 feet in length overall with a 20-ft. beam and a draught of 8 ft. 6 ins. Her propellers were driven through 2-1 reduction gears, which meant that machinery space was considerably reduced, allowing increased accommodation.

It was, however, not a *Campeador* but his famous 12-metre racing yacht, *Trivia*, which first brought MacAndrew into national yachting history. In 1938 he steered her so successfully that at Cowes Week he won twenty-one prizes including the King's Cup and most of the other leading awards.

*Campeador V* was frequently used as headquarters when MacAndrew raced in *Trivia*. It was in no sense the 'luxury yacht' of subsequent ill-informed

accounts. The implied palace afloat would have been repugnant to MacAndrew's nature. She was amply furnished, as her owner's means permitted, but he was too good a seaman ever to contemplate luxury at the expense of efficiency. He did not achieve his yachting successes by affluence, but by passionate and laborious attention to detail ; by enthusiasm and stern discipline to which he subjected himself before anyone. He found other outlets for his wealth. In the years of *Campeador's* building he presented Warfleet House, Dartmouth, with a gift of £20,000 to the Y.M.C.A. for the establishment of a nautical school. He helped to resuscitate small-boat sailing in Dartmouth and provided many boats for the Dart One-design Dinghy Club. He also gave three dinghies to the R.N. College.

MacAndrew was not an easy man to get 'close to' ; he was retiring and reticent, but every man who served with him recorded their respect for his knowledge, his fine sportsmanship, his devotion to the sea. He was widely travelled, but yachting was his chief interest in recent years. His hobby of collecting sea-shells, which, with its encouragement to solitude and its dividend of beauty, was perhaps typical of the man. Muir, with whom he was subsequently to serve under another in his own ship, had frequently associated with him. MacAndrew was Rear-Commodore of the Royal Dart Yacht Club, to which Muir and Lieutenant Charles Turner also belonged.

These three of the 'happy band of brothers' enjoyed much comradeship in peace. Upon the united strength of this quartette the gallant exploits of *Campeador* were built. Each man was tested long before they came together in this sturdy ship. Their

friendships were cemented, their experiences welded, by mutual interests, by a common background, by life-long devotion to the sea, and above all to those small ships of which *Campeador V* was to become so splendid an exemplar in war.

Muir, whose friendship I count a privilege and an inspiration, was short and stocky; his rugged face redeemed from sternness by his searching yet twinkling eyes. He stood like a rock, yet always with that impression of resilience which suggested that the deck was under his feet. This was more than a physical stance; it was his mental and spiritual attitude. It found an answer in Turner.

Muir agreed emphatically with the Water Rat in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*: 'Believe me, my young friend, there is *nothing*, absolutely nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.'

He used the title for his book of small craft reminiscences, in the publication of which I had some part. For the author was diffident about letting me see those random jottings. Typical diffidence, yet *Messing about in Boats* was immediately welcomed and was authoritatively reviewed as a classic of small craft.

But though messing about in boats was a passion with all the officers who made the little *Campeador* an heroic ship, it was no idle hobby.

Muir began sailing as a boy in the West Indies, but it was as a medical student in Scotland that the pastime became a passion. Muir was a son of the manse. There was no money after educational charges were paid. But the student was undaunted. He calculated that he could reduce his living expenses if he boarded in

his own boat. He bargained for a £25-boat. He had inspected it, at first secretly, then openly. He beat the man down to £22 and paid over two sovereigns. He went without lunches, pawned his microscope for £7, kept his divinity student brother out of bed for a whole night while he argued his case. He begged for money which the divinity student had saved for his own holiday.

John Muir obtained the money and the boat. He did not lose his brother's esteem and his passion did not seduce him from work. He was to become Surgeon Rear-Admiral John R. Muir, M.B., F.R.C.S.(Ed.), with a notable reputation as a surgeon and a no less distinguished record as a navigator.

At the outbreak of the Great War he was Senior Medical Officer at Chatham.

He served in H.M.S. *Tiger*, then the largest, fastest, and most powerful battle cruiser in the world. As he recorded in his autobiography, *Years of Endurance*, 'Speed and beauty were welded into every line of her. Here indeed was a ship ! The highest ideals of grace and power had taken form at the bidding of the artist's brain of her designer. Wherever she went she satisfied the eye of the sailorman and I have known them to pull miles just that the sweetness of her lines might delight their eyes.' That was the Muir known to so many of us ; the man compact of action and artistic instincts ; the realist who saw beyond even the most urgent realities to the spirit which animated them.

He saw service in the Scarborough Raids, at the Dogger Bank, and at Jutland. At Jutland, just ahead of *Tiger* the *Queen Mary* suddenly burst into an appalling



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mass of smoke and flame. It reared to a height of 800 feet and then opened out into a screen, 'completely masking our vision ahead. Underneath this pall, and travelling so rapidly towards us that it was throwing up a bow wave, the stern of the stricken ship suddenly appeared and looked as if it were going to run into us although a second before it had been travelling at 26 knots in the opposite direction. Just as collision seemed inevitable the stern dived into the depths and sank so rapidly that although *Tiger* must have passed over it, it did not touch.' Just after the explosion the concussion of the water struck the *Tiger* so violently that it felt as if she had been torpedoed.

Three enemy shells had struck *Queen Mary* simultaneously. All trace of her and her 1300 men had disappeared.

The *Tiger* went ahead and took up her station in the line astern of the flagship to fill the place of the missing ship.

In that place she fought so fiercely and suffered such damage that Muir worked to exhaustion. When the action relaxed sufficiently to make operations possible, Muir dashed to the Sick Bay which embodied all his planned arrangements for the speedy handling of the wounded. It had been completely destroyed.

Back in the dressing station they made the best they could of conditions. He began operating at 9.30 p.m. Action was expected to be renewed at 3.30 a.m., when there would be added casualties. He had no conception of time. When the last urgent case was on the table he noticed that the patient was not completely under the anæsthetic. Without lifting his head

from the job Muir said : ' Can't you keep him under ? How the devil can I do anything properly while he is wriggling about like this ? '

There was no answer. Muir looked round. The boy who was then acting as anæsthetist had dropped off his stool and was lying on the floor asleep. He had anæsthetized himself.

Muir asked the time. It was 5.30 a.m. He and his assistants had been operating without ceasing for eight hours.

Later, exhausted, ill and violently sick, Muir sought a few minutes respite in the navigator's cabin which had escaped destruction. ' On pushing aside the curtain,' he records, ' I could not see any occupant, but stepping forward to seat myself in a comfortable arm-chair, I saw an officer, whose face I did not recognize, looking at me. I went forward to speak to him, to find that I was looking at my own reflection in a mirror.'

After such a record, retirement might have seemed deserved. He had had ten days' leave in two and a half years. Six months' rest in barracks was suggested. Muir could not tolerate the prospect.

He was appointed Chief Medical Officer in charge of the Station at Wei-hai-wei, on the Shantung Promontory of China. So, ' I did not see the surrender of the German Fleet at Scapa Flow, and I was glad of it. Apart from the ethics of their submarine warfare, which was a source of grief and wonder to all of us who had known and admired the German naval officers in the happy, pre-war days, their organization, equipment and fighting spirit were deeply admired by everybody in the Fleet. We fought with no mean enemy,

and the humiliation of the surrender at Scapa was no fitting end for such men and such ships.'

Muir was invalided home from Wei-hai-wei with dysentery in 1919, and subsequently appointed to the Royal Naval Home, Haslar, where he did surgery for seven years. After his retirement he lived on board the yacht *Patience* for some time and subsequently in Paignton, Devon, where he found scope for his knowledge and enthusiasm. He devoted much time to writing, but more to sailing. He was keenly interested in the formation of the Brixham Yacht Club, of which he was a trustee. He was instrumental in organizing the cruising yachts at the Torbay Coronation and International Regatta. He belonged to the Royal Cruising Club, the Cruising Association, the Royal Ocean Racing Club, and his services were continually sought as a judge and as a navigator. He enjoyed ocean racing, and in the last Fastnet Race before the war he sailed in *Griffin* (23 tons), owned by H. E. West, Esq., and Commander E. G. Martin. She was the smallest ship in the race and her handling was a wonderful test of real seamanship.

When war appeared to be imminent he devoted all his time and energies to securing an opportunity that would give his experience active service. He was white-haired, slightly deaf at times, a Jutland legacy, and he was sixty-six. But at last, and he wrote to me with delight to convey the news, he was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant, R.N.V.R., and appointed to *Campeador V* as navigator and watch-keeper.

Charles Turner, of Kingswear, was one of a family of eight. The seven brothers were brought up, by a father who loved the sea, to handle boats under oars

and sail. All became capable seafarers, with Charles perhaps the ablest. For years his annual holiday was devoted to a cruise in a small craft. Invariably several of his brothers would accompany him. At the age of fourteen, in a 17-ft. decked ship's boat converted to a yawl rig, he made his first cruise, as far as Fowey. His next craft was a 28-ft. clinker-built cutter of very ancient vintage, with a large open cockpit, saloon, and forecastle.

In this he sailed for several years, visiting the Scillies and Cherbourg. In 1906 his craft was a double-ended, teak, diagonal-built ketch of 31 ft. After a year under sail a motor was fitted as an auxiliary. A brother, now an engineer, had assisted in this development which, at that time, was considered worthy of wide notice and comment.

In 1912 Turner took up an appointment in Manaus, on the Amazon, and subsequently took charge of Manaus Harbour, Ltd. The Amazon tributary, Rio Negro, is broad at Manaus, with little current, so Turner found much opportunity for sailing. As two of his brothers followed him to Manaus in the next year he had with him the nucleus of his West-Country crew. He was the only man on record who had swum the river, at that point nearly two miles wide.

His term in Manaus was broken by war service. In 1916 he returned to England and joined the R.N.V.R. as Sub-Lieutenant, afterwards Lieutenant. He was on patrol service in mine-laying until November, 1918, in the Firth of Forth. After the Armistice, until April, 1919, he was mine-sweeping in the North Sea. This service in itself is a tribute to his seamanship.

He loved and respected the sea, and throughout all

his years in Manaos, whence he returned after his post-war mine-sweeping, he had one ambition. From it he never swerved. It was to retire at fifty-five and to purchase a sizeable craft in which he could cruise around.

He achieved his desire, retiring in 1936, to the house of his brother, Mr. G. Ellis Turner, who had shared so many of his adventures in the West-Country and in South America.

He was a member of the Royal Cruising Club and the Royal Dart Yacht Club. He purchased the 40-ton ketch *Windward* and sailed her to the Bay of Biscay, Holland, Norway, etc. In 1939 he replaced her by *Gaiwota*. She was laid up at the outbreak of war in September, 1939. Turner was then in his fifty-ninth year.

In 1937 Admiral and Mrs. J. R. Muir made a voyage to the Amazon. In the same ship was Charles Turner, who was then on a visit to a brother who still remains at Manaos. Turner and Muir, a Goliath and a David in height, were immediately attracted to one another. Their respect for each other's character and love of the sea was the rock upon which they built a warm companionship.

Turner did not go all the way with Muir in his enthusiasm for the racing side of sailing, though he was always ready to lend a hand as 'crew' or 'skipper' of a friend's craft at any of the regattas or matches when he was home on leave. In one sense, perhaps, he regarded racing as too finicky; in another, probably his innate cautiousness, which had no derivation in fear, allowed no fine edge of interest. It was never fear that prompted him to allow in sailing matters a

good margin of safety. He believed and practised that it was bad seamanship to allow anything to go wrong from causes that might have been foreseen. He never risked ship or crew by taking chances. He never asked any man to do that which he would not do himself.

## CHAPTER TWO

IT WAS IN May, 1939, that suggestions were made for a cruise by *Campeador V* to the Canaries and adjacent coasts. It was arranged that Charles Turner should accompany her owner, MacAndrew. The former immediately visualized Muir, of whom he thought 'the worlds,' as a companion. All three men were well acquainted and had had experience of each other's qualities at sea. All three signed articles for that voyage.

Muir, with whom I was then in continual contact in the writing of his *The Life and Achievements of Captain James Cook, R.N., F.R.S.*, wrote to me confidentially to announce the voyage which would hinder his proof-reading and possibly delay the publication of the book.

'I'm afraid this will sound like an unbelievable chapter out of Edgar Wallace, but the times are troublous and my belief that all that kind of thing must pass me by on account of my senile decay has proved to be false.

'Late last night I accepted an offer to pilot a large yacht down off the coast of Africa and we clear for sea on Wednesday [two days ahead].

'We sail as an innocent crowd of idiots so fond of the sea that we have not the sense to stay at home when

trouble is brewing, and we hold no commission or written instructions of any kind. . . .’

So on May 17, 1939, *Campeador V* began her war work ; an amateur, not a professional ; a rich man’s yacht manned by skilled and enthusiastic yachtsmen. She retained her original grace and elegance, the concessions to comfort and freedom that did not impair efficiency. She was gleaming white and speedy. She commanded interest, respect, envy in every harbour. She was a yachtsman’s pride.

It is perhaps not without interest, and it points the contrast with *Campeador’s* subsequent rigorous activities, to record a few of the pleasant pen-pictures from this voyage. It was her last sea-going occasion as a yacht ; the last carefree voyage for her officers.

For these few glimpses of her journeyings I am indebted to personal conversations and to Muir’s jottings printed privately in the Bulletin of the Cruising Association (Vol. IX, No. 153, September, 1939).

‘The attractions of Santa Cruz de Teneriffe were beginning to pall, so the news that one of the modern destroyers of British prestige abroad—a cruising liner—was due later in the evening decided the owner that it was time to be up and doing. We had in mind the Salvages ; uninhabited, remote, forlorn, apart.’

It was a typical tropic night, with the stars blazing brilliantly overhead, while the balmy air felt like a benediction. Muir wrote : ‘I kept the middle watch, but there was no hardship in that watch.’ Later, when *Campeador* was in war trim and battling with the fiercest winter for several generations, Muir was frequently to keep the middle watch. I am able to

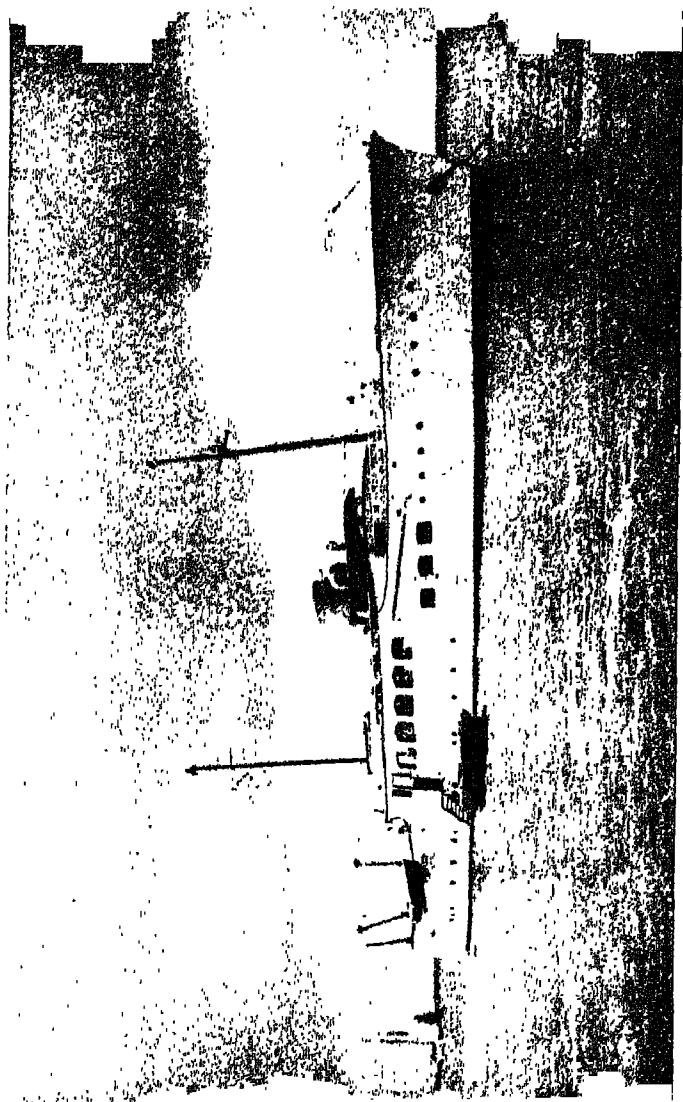


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include in this narrative his vivid description of that watch, sent to me from *Campeador*. He does not then complain of hardship in the middle watch, but none can read his account of the dark vigil without appreciating its physical and mental strain.

But on this occasion *Campeador* was to be welcome at the islands which were said to be uninhabited and almost waterless. The chief islands of the group, which belongs to Portugal, are the Great and Little Pitons and the Great Salvage Island. Great Piton, with an average elevation of between 30 and 40 feet, has an abrupt conical hill at the middle of its northern shore. This is Hart Hill (177 feet). Its summit, one of many volcanic excrescences, is whitewashed. From the sea the land appeared to be carpeted with reddish-coloured heath. There is no record of any rain having fallen on Great Piton and it was supposed to be deserted. But 'as we approached our anchorage we saw a small fishing ketch, about 30 tons Thames, rolling slowly to the slight swell. There did not appear to be anyone aboard her, but suddenly all over the island people were streaming down to the landing place ; men, women, children, goats and dogs.'

Any doubts that *Campeador* had as to her reception were soon dispelled by the call of the owner of and captain of the ketch who came to offer assistance. In his little ketch he had brought the whole population of the island, thirty-nine humans, the whole of the water supply, their provisions for six months, and the live stock. Included in the ship's equipment were ten dinghies, about 10 feet long, in which the men fished with rod and line. When *Campeador* anchored, this community had been ninety-four days on the





island. It included the owners of the fishing boats, who paid a quarter share of their gains for passage and catering. None had seen other humans in that period.

The captain's main difficulty was water. There was none in the island and 'when it got short he had to make the passage across to Great Salvage where there was a rain catchment and a tank, but this usually cost him two days' absence from the fishing ground and some back-breaking toil. He grumbled like a Cowes skipper over the way the women wasted the water. "They actually want to wash in it!" Human depravity could go no further in his estimation.'

When they went ashore *Campeador's* men found that the sandy soil of Great Piton was thickly clothed with several different species of mesembryanthemum. Despite the absence of rain the leaves were soft and succulent and the coloured flowers were surrounded by globules of moisture. The boys said the goats fed on this plant and gave plentiful milk.

There were numerous holes in the soil, like rabbit holes. Above them boys burrowed in the sand and quickly produced bundles of grey fluff. The holes were the nests of shearwaters ; at that season one of the chief items in the visitors' larder.

One of the eleven daughters of the owner of the ketch was dressed in beach pyjamas. She was twenty-four and appeared to be the schoolmistress. The father invariably had difficulty in remembering how many daughters he had, and their names. But he also had two sons, quite children, and an elder boy had been killed in the Franco war.

The women, many of whom had babies at the breast,

lived in 4-ft. high hovels, constructed with lava pebbles and roofed with seaweed. On the roofs, always at hand, were the household utensils, generally a kettle and a frying-pan. Drift wood was used for firing, but it was scarce. The women were employed in drying the catches of parrot fish and bream and collecting outside limpets, which were also dried.

‘The fish were split open and then roughly cleaned before being entered for the race between the anti-septic drying properties of the sun and the normal processes of mortification. From the odour of the finished article it was plain that the race had ended in a dead heat between the two antagonists. When a full cargo of the dried fish had been obtained, the ship with her motley complement would return to Arcife (Lanzarote) where the market for their highly scented cargo was keen.’

MacAndrew, a keen fisherman, exchanged notes with the owner of the ketch and presented the captain with a ton of fresh water for his parched community, who were cheery and loquacious when they found that the Englishmen had fluent Spanish. Even so they thought the visitors were Germans, a mistake which Muir hoped was attributable to the presence in the party of two Scotsmen, whose masterly handling of the Spanish gutturals was apparently deceptive.

Muir operated on one of the fishermen who was incapacitated by huge salt-water boils on his fore-arms. ‘I did the dirty work before an admiring audience on an anything but trusting victim. Later in the day he rowed off to show how much good I had done him and how well he was obeying my instructions to rest for a day or two.

'The result of the deliberations between the two fishermen, professional and amateur, was a paternoster which subsequently rendered up from the sea a couple of small sharks, some parrot fish, and a few bream. The professional seaman spent a happy hour on our deck preparing the paternoster and calling Heaven to witness that it was the cause of all his poverty by deluging him beneath a wave of female children. His eldest son, a boy of twelve, helped to arrange the hooks, smiled as at a tale twice told over his father's diatribes and grinned hugely when his share of the loot was found to be a dozen oranges. Like a Fascist diplomat he came to the conclusion that any trouble about sharing them when he got ashore had best be avoided, so he ate the lot during the time it took to row him a cable's length to the beach. He had the makings of a great man in a Falangist community.'

The next morning they left Great Piton and found a similar anchorage off Great Salvage. They landed in Cagarras Cove, 'a beautiful rock-locked pool with a dozen natural piers and two fathoms of water everywhere. The sea was a heavenly azure.'

This is Muir's last note from the voyage, a voyage dictated by duty, but with the aspect of indolent pleasure, a yachting trip by 'an innocent crowd of idiots so fond of the sea that we have not the sense to stay at home when trouble is brewing.' He wrote, after Great Salvage: 'The air from the trade wind blowing gently across the plateau was as stimulating and pleasant as wine, there were no flies, mosquitoes or pests of any description. Where could man be happier?'

Muir was to answer his own question ; it was the answer that suited them all. Man, at least these men, could be happier still in the active service of their country, not when trouble was brewing, but when the storm had broken.

Later, when *Campeador* had survived months of patrol in the severest weather, her reputation for endurance was the talk of the Portsmouth Command.

An officer whose duties took him aboard to see Davey told me : ‘ He had occasion to send for his navigating officer. Surgeon Rear-Admiral Muir, dressed in the uniform of a sub-lieutenant, R.N.V.R., appeared. I asked him what he was doing in that rig, and he drew himself up, saluted me, and replied : “ Enjoying life, sir.” ’

‘ On another occasion I went on board after *Campeador* had spent ten days on patrol off the Nab in very bad weather in January. I told Commander Davey that I hoped to be able to give him a spell in harbour very soon. The reply came : “ We would rather stay out if you can arrange to get our mails out and fresh provisions occasionally.” ’

## CHAPTER THREE

*CAMPEADOR'S* OFFICERS and crew were to have a few months' respite. On June 25, 1939, Muir wrote to me from his home to record his return :

'We arrived back in Dartmouth Friday evening after having had to put in to Brest to get some shelter from the north-east gale that was blowing. On the whole we had good weather except on the return journey from Lisbon, when we ran into strong head winds and finally got that gale in the Bay.

'The trip has been a very interesting one as we have combed the Canaries and the Madeiras thoroughly, having gone over with a small-toothed comb many of the lesser known islands where there is no record of any Englishman having been before. Also we visited the Salvages, which are only known to treasure hunters and not to very many of them as they are uninhabited and waterless. Of course it was rather nervous work as all the islands are under military law and the Franco hold is only kept up by severely repressive measures. Any false move on our part would have sent us all to swell the numbers in the Concentration Camps and the yacht (valued at £30,000) would have been confiscated. . . .

'Luckily most of the lesser-known places could not make head or tail of us. They had never seen a yacht in their lives, and as MacAndrew and I spoke fluent



Spanish and the other members of the afterguard spoke Portuguese they gave us up and swallowed the yarn that we had come to try the fishing as the other fishing grounds were overcrowded. That they could understand, and showed us all the best places. . . .

'The mental picture of the contempt with which we and our country are regarded by both the Republicans and the Falangists is an unforgettable one. No one believes we could fight or that Chamberlain would fight no matter what the insult or the provocation might be. The British flag has entirely disappeared from the islands where it used to be supreme and the cruising liner passenger has completely destroyed whatever prestige we had left. Our non-intervention policy is believed by the Republicans to have been the chief cause of Franco's victory, while the Falangists blame us for allowing our ships to trade with the Republican ports.

'All the trade which ten years ago was in our hands is now carried on by the Germans and Italians, and the British houses are closing down and sending their people home.

'Either our policy is very badly wrong or the whole world is topsy-turvy and we are the only people who are right.'

The next letters I received from *Campeador V* were after that shining Sunday morning, September 3, 1939, when Mr. Neville Chamberlain's grave but resonant words had travelled round the world.

'We and France are to-day, in fulfilment of our obligations, going to the aid of Poland, who is so bravely resisting this wicked and unprovoked attack upon her people. We have a clear conscience. We

have done all that any country could do to establish peace. The situation, in which no word given by Germany's ruler could be trusted and no people or country could feel themselves safe, has become intolerable.

'And now that we have resolved to finish it, I know that you will all play your part with calmness and courage. . . .

'Now may God bless you all. May He defend the right. It is evil things we are fighting against—brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression, and persecution—against them I am certain that right will prevail.'

*Campeador V* was no longer a rich man's pleasure, a sturdy but comfortable yacht. She was part of the Fleet of His Britannic Majesty; her shining white was dimmed, her decks cleared for action. Much had been swept away, much replaced. But there was no replacing of her veteran officers. These three, her owner, MacAndrew, Turner, and Muir, awaited their commander. He was to be a West Countryman; a veteran himself. They were well content.

*Campeador V* was placed by her owner at the disposal of the Admiralty. She was commissioned on September 18 and attached to the Auxiliary Patrol Service. Her command was given to Commander C. H. Davey, O.B.E., R.N., Retd., who joined H.M.S. *Britannia* as a naval cadet at the age of thirteen. He had served in the Royal Navy from 1893 to 1911 and had returned to service for the Great War.

In 1919 Davey took over the Mastership of the Dartmoor Hounds. He had been Master of the North Cornwall Foxhounds in 1912 and of the Co. Waterford Foxhounds in the following year.

When he came to the Dartmoor country there were those who wondered how he would compare with the great Masters of the past, for they still speak with reverence of such men as Bulteel, Trelawny, Parker, and Coryton. But Davey did not disappoint. He was by none surpassed in popularity or in showing better sport.

He was a man of ample means, but, like MacAndrew, derived his keenest pleasures from the pursuit of those occupations that satisfied the whole man in him. He had the splendid ability to enjoy life to the full, and, even greater blessing, the art of making everybody, high and low, share his pleasures with him. He had innumerable friends in every sphere of life.

In September, 1939, he immediately volunteered for service. In that month occurred his sixtieth birthday.

Engineer-Lieutenant H. Yersin, who sought an interview with Commander Davey with a view to being included in *Campeador's* complement, said after that first meeting: 'He filled us with confidence. He offered to see me immediately; even offered to come and fetch me. I took to him at once, recognizing him as a man's man, with little or no red tape about him. I had seen him at hunts on Dartmoor. He hunted four days a week throughout the season. He was passionately fond of his horses and dogs and was one of the finest huntsmen in Devon.'

*Campeador V* was now a patrol vessel. One of those small ships of which the Lord Mayor of London was to speak so eloquently a year later in his broadcast to New York. 'It is the little ships which bear the brunt of the enemy's attack by torpedo, mine, and bomb, and these little ships . . . are the key to our safety



*Photo: A. Vincent Bibbings*

TEMPORARY LIEUT. VERNON W. MACANDREW, R.N.V.R.  
*The owner of Cambeador V.*



and yours. . . . I ask you to remember as you go to bed to-night that the patrols of the Royal Navy are guarding not only the shores of Britain, but the security of the whole world.'

The Auxiliary Patrol service was formed at the outbreak of war when the Admiralty took over many fishing craft as patrol vessels in their scheme of submarine defences.

These innumerable craft, typical of the mosquito fleet that played a magnificent part in the Dunkirk epic, were manned by able fishermen whose daily peace-time hazards were so great and whose seamanship was so skilled that they were often apt to regard the unaccustomed dangers of war as peaceful by comparison. These swarms of small craft were reinforced by many yachts of varying tonnage, placed at the disposal of the Admiralty by their owners.

This Patrol service was swiftly mobilized and enlarged until it was able to throw a cordon round the shores of Britain, from Wick round the east and south coasts and up the west coast as far as Larne and Liverpool. In many parts of this cordon the boats were manned by men who knew their particular 'beat' intimately and could take in their stride the countless coastal and tidal dangers and still give their unwavering attention to the acute and unpredictable dangers of war.

Whatever the weather the Patrol service kept ceaseless, unbroken watch over hundreds of vulnerable miles.

*Campeador V* was a large link in the vital chain. Many of the motor yachts were small, carrying only a second hand, an engineer, and a couple of ordinary

seamen. Most of the officers were drawn from the R.N.V.R. With these smaller craft there was usually one officer to about a dozen yachts. With trawlers and drifters one officer would sometimes supervise two or more vessels, with skippers in charge of the others. The crews of fishermen, many of whom were serving in the ships they manned in peace time, were specially enlisted for duration.

Incorporated in this cordon of vigilance was the Port of London Authority River Emergency Service, whose 'beat' extended from Tower Bridge to Hole Haven.

Many allied vessels were later included in Patrol service, and on the south-west coast, where *Campeador V* was frequently engaged, were trawlers manned by Poles.

While some of the trawlers and drifters were built and equipped for endurance, many of the yachts and small private craft were fair weather ships, intended for frequent contact with land and unable to be fuelled for long trips. The constant calls at port and the necessity for maintaining the cordon unbroken through the critically severe winter of 1939-40 were in themselves facts that called for sustained ingenuity and seamanship and the highest standard of human endurance.

Many of the Patrols were in action daily against enemy aircraft, so much so that one officer complained that the ships under his supervision were so used to action that they didn't bother to report unless there were casualties.

Units of the Patrol, which flew the White Ensign, had not only to keep constant communication among

themselves, but with the shore defences. They were the sentries of the inner line. First the Royal Navy, then the larger vessels of the Patrol, such as *Campeador*, then, even closer in, nosing about among the treacherous creeks and bays, threading the perilous rocks in icy darkness, were the thousands of small trawlers and drifters.

It was their duty to challenge all comers and to face enemy ships, aircraft, submarines, mines. Many veteran ships were in the line, many veterans among their officers and men.

A destroyer might race past, a tanker edge away in the darkness. A convoy might be sighted, allied shipping with suspicious outline but good intentions, with apparently sinister purpose but reassuring signals. Neutrals that must be challenged. The sea itself was alive with dangers; British mines, not always static, enemy mines sown swiftly and unpredictably in the pitch darkness. Enemy planes were constantly overhead, British planes on lawful occasions. Always the tension of unending blackness that might at any moment reveal swift peril.



## CHAPTER FOUR.

*CAMPEADOR V* set out with confidence at 6 a.m. on an early October morning. There was a terrific easterly gale. She had a sturdy complement aboard, 'all glad to be on the job, and greatly excited as to what might await us.'

The engineers, Trafford and Yersin, were old friends ; they joined the ship together. S. Brimilcombe, Chief Petty Officer, was drafted to *Campeador* a week after she sailed. He was a fine old Devon seafarer, a bachelor who had retired from the sea a dozen years before. Since then he had devoted an equal affection to a garden which was his pride. He loved his pint of beer and his pipe was his best friend. He quickly taught the younger members of the crew how to whip their leaf tobacco and the smell of his old pipe was to pervade the ship.

Ash, the Chief Steward, quietly efficient, with a record of twenty-five years in the Merchant Service. 'Old Walter,' the cook, whose name, seldom used, was Pittick, had been cook aboard Sir Thomas Lipton's yachts, and H. F. Paul's *Astra*. He had also been fishing in the 'Narth' Sea, during the Great War, enjoying adventures which it was his constant delight to recall.

The leading seaman, Coleman, was well known as son of a prominent Brixham fisherman. He had been one

of the crew aboard before *Campeador* joined the Patrol service. Boutell, the mate, had been bosun in the *Westward*.

The departure of the patrol vessel was a foretaste of the rigours to come. She faced terrific seas, seas so bad that at Paignton and near places, where high seas are accepted, crowds gathered to watch the storms on the front. All were prepared for the rigours of war, but none knew that they were to face the worst winter that the British Isles had suffered for many generations.

*Campeador V* was now dull grey and almost sinister in comparison with her once bright beauty. She was low in the water and she rolled alarmingly. Almost everyone was ill. At one time, despite the fact that almost every man had had long sea experience, only MacAndrew and Muir had not succumbed to seasickness. It was the rolling of the small craft to which the men were unaccustomed, and conditions were so bad that her Commander put under the lee of Chesil Beach for two days to await better conditions. There the officers and crew hoped for a meal, but most of them were feeling too ill to contemplate food.

'But everyone,' said Yersin, 'stuck it out, and soon we had our sea legs. Later, when a young midshipman came aboard for training, and was exceedingly ill, even in calm seas, we were able to sympathize and at the same time feel slightly superior and very thankful that our period of initiation was over.'

Yersin, who had been works manager of a motor business and had previously served his apprenticeship as an engineer, was to find his own difficulties and to overcome them. The heat in the engine room was terrific as there were no ventilator fans working and

the portholes had to be closed for black-out purposes. He found the heat harder to bear than the rolling of the ship. There was to come a time when even the engine room was pitilessly cold.

Thus began the months of unceasing patrol; months in which all suffered intense rigours of weather, faced unceasing danger, and endured conditions that might well have seemed beyond the powers of her veteran officers.

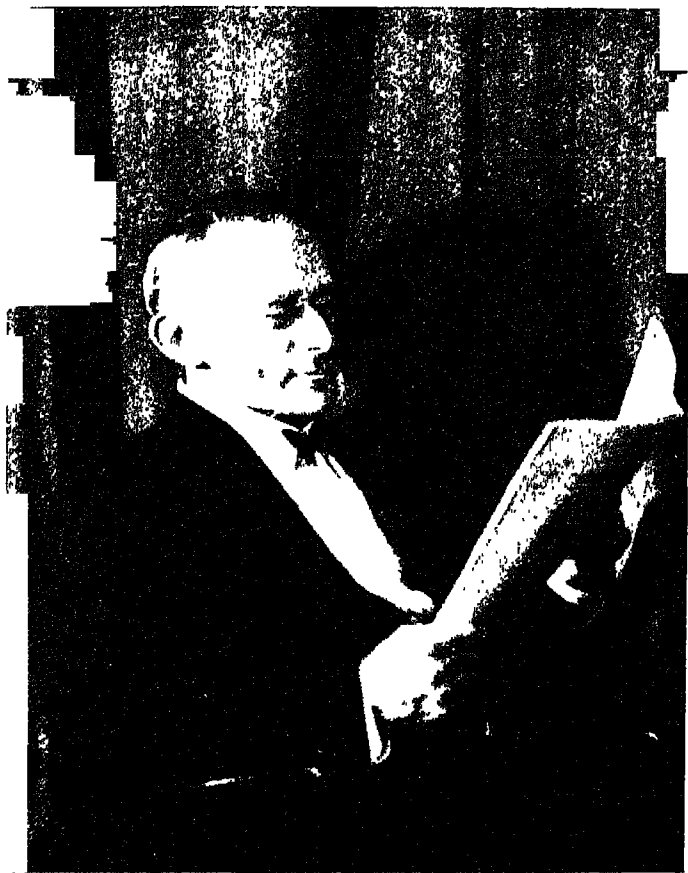
Here is a glimpse of them, through Yersin's eyes. Four sailors whose average age was over sixty; not officers who had been dug out of retirement; men who volunteered eagerly.

'Commander Davey seemed a superman. He would be on the bridge all day and half the night, and then he would sleep with a radio speaker above his head, ready for any urgent call.

'Lieutenant MacAndrew was one of the finest men at the wheel, as well as being so fine a yachtsman. He was strong as a horse, very quiet, but missed nothing.

'Lieutenant Muir was the finest officer of the watch—so keen on the look out. When I was off duty I used to chat with him on deck and he taught me many interesting things about the stars. He gave the crew tuition on navigation, and MacAndrew gave them tuition on the guns. I took an immense liking to Muir when I joined the ship, and in spite of the disparity in our ages we became firm friends. He was like a father to me and explained the etiquette of Naval service.

'Lieutenant Turner told stories, when on watch, of his experiences in the last war. He told us once that he was mistaken for *Garnera* in a South American



COMMANDER C. H. DAVEY, O.B.E., R.N.  
In command



town and was almost overpowered by autograph hunters.'

Turner, who was 6 ft. 4½ in., was known as 'Tiny' or 'Shorty' to his Naval colleagues; 'Duck' to his Amazonian friends. He had a gift for friendship and was still corresponding regularly with friends of the Great War. He was the life of the mess and he and stocky Muir loved to argue the toss.

The monotony of the perilous patrol, and withal the excitement of it, are perhaps best expressed in one of Muir's own notes. I had sent him some books which 'have been much appreciated by everyone on board and are still going the round.

'I little thought when I responded to an appeal to my patriotism to navigate this ship down to the Canaries that it would result in my peering anxiously over the dodger in the middle of a cold blustering October night, wondering whether what I saw was a submarine trying to jump our defences or only a breaking wave, while one's chilled fingers were unconsciously seeking for the alarm switch which would set the shore batteries going.

'More than once the deciding factor was that the shore batteries were just as likely to blow us out of the water as the submarine if there should be one lurking under our lee, and it's wonderful the soothing result of such a thought on one's first panic-stricken movements.

'This work is necessary, but it is boring to the nth degree and one for which virtue is its own reward. Practically all of it is night work, cruising about without lights with all the shore lights out or so altered that it is difficult to recognize them, and the sure and

certain knowledge that there are plenty of others all round you doing the same thing.

‘In the ordinary way of navigation one would seek the shelter of the charthouse and pass the night in a moderate—very moderate—degree of comfort ; but an enemy vessel could not be spotted through the glass, and the split second which allows you to avoid collision with one of your own darkened vessels would be lost. So we stand outside in the spray and the wind, peer and curse, say this is the most damnable war we have ever experienced, and, when our relief turns up, dive down below to get most of the four hours’ sleep allotted to us. And then the wretched navigator is routed out, just when he is dropping off, to give a course or to be asked what the alteration of this or that may be. Of course he doesn’t know and has to get up and mug up confidential orders again.

‘But, by Jove ! I wouldn’t be anywhere else in the world, not even for a 1918 war profiteer’s fortune !’

## CHAPTER FIVE

THERE IS NO better tribute to the enthusiasm of *Campeador's* officers in conditions of unprecedented severity than Muir's description which he sent me of 'The Middle Watch.'

It is also a first-class sketch for a portrait of the Auxiliary Patrol service at work.

Number One (MacAndrew) and I are standing in front of the barograph in the deck saloon. As navigator of a patrol ship, lately promoted to that giddy height from the inferior status of luxury yacht, I take more than a common interest in the undulations of that capricious instrument, especially as its present indications are anything but reassuring in view of the fact that we are due for the night patrol.

After a glance at the sea and sky through the saloon windows : 'Glass dropping rapidly,' I rumble, 'sea getting up. Hard line of clouds to windward. If all this doesn't spell trouble, call me a Dutchman. And the Dutch are good sailors—just like me.'

'Chuck it,' says Number One. 'And stop being pessimistic. Out we go on the night patrol at three o'clock this afternoon and there's no sense in meeting your troubles half-way out of the harbour. There'll be plenty worse to worry about before this war is over.'



The ship, looking painfully warlike in her coat of grey paint, is a complete contrast to the butterfly that graced Cowes Roads only last summer, though the sight of the cabin furniture would break the heart of Mrs. MacAndrew.

Indeed, it is impossible to maintain that the ship represents the highest standard of Naval 'spit and polish' and carries out all the minutiae of Service routine which brings such satisfaction to many hide-bound hearts, but there can be little doubt as to her suitability and efficiency for the job of patrolling and submarine hunting in which she is engaged. Of sufficiently shallow draught to enable her to avoid minefields and torpedoes, she has ample speed to chase or retire as the dictates of the attack or the courage of the attackers may determine.

Naturally, there are other factors besides a solitary ship to be reckoned with in any organized defence against underwater craft, and our supports must be considered as adequate and excellently planned. Still, the fact remains that in any battle that may take place the ship will be the first and probably the most vulnerable target.

Our comfort when we are feeling particularly mouldy as to our chances of success is to remember that the submarine will always avoid an attack on the surface by an above-water vessel if it can possibly do so. A lucky shot from quite a small gun may cause the submarine's complete destruction, as its effects may compel the commander to travel on the surface and remove his principal guarantee of safety—his ability to elude his enemies by diving.

To add to our appreciation of the horrors of war the

Officer in Command of the shore batteries has warned us that his guns are manned night and day by as fine a body of hearty young fellows as it has ever been his lot to command ; that they are simply itching to let loose at something or someone in order to prove the efficiency of his training and, provided they are supplied with a reasonable excuse, such as someone bungling the rather elaborate system of recognition signals, they will have no compunction about opening fire. Indeed, he left us with the impression that he himself would take a grim delight in proving the efficiency of his batteries on our vile bodies, provided we were prepared to supply him with any proof that our smartness was inferior to the excessive slickness of his men !

Such and such a signal draws searchlights ; such and such another draws guns. Who might be the sufferer from the gun-fire was left to our grisly imagination.

No wonder the first reaction of the officer of the watch when taking over is an anxious inquiry whether the recognition signals are correct, or that he refuses to take ' Yes ' for an answer until he has verified the reply.

As we leave the shelter of the harbour the ship pushes her shoulders violently into an approaching wave, with results that bring the men who have been working on the forecastle head aft with a curse, to shake themselves like dogs after a swim.

' Serve 'em right ! ' says Number One, who is always at the wheel and engine controls when we are leaving or entering harbour, ' they should not have been so slow in fishing the anchor.'

As the owner and (temporarily for the duration)

dispossessed skipper of the yacht, Number One has his own ideas as to how things should be done. In the days of our servitude, when our status was that of useful guests, we others had agreed that you could hardly tell the owner of the ship in which you were luxuriously housed and fed that he was all wrong—especially as he had a nasty habit, a quite unnecessary habit, of proving that he knew more about the subject under discussion than the critics.

Now that we have a Naval Commander on board, the responsibility of the ship and all that she does rests on him, and there is some amusement in watching this alteration in the status of the owner on the manners of his erstwhile guests. They grab and growl at their food in the wardroom without waiting to be asked and generally behave as if they owned the ship.

Away in the offing we can see the hull of the ship we are due to relieve and, from the manner in which she is pitching and rolling, it is evident that she must consider we have every right to the blessed name of 'relief.' The seas, wind against tide, are gradually increasing in height, without the usual corresponding lengthening, so that where, up to now, we have shouldered them aside with no greater penalty than a wetted jacket, they are beginning to clamber over the forecastle head, and it becomes necessary to reduce speed lest the violence of their impact should carry something away.

Soon the patrol vessel comes surging towards us, yawing about like a boy's kite ; one moment showing us the whole length of her bilge keels and the next a bird's-eye view of her boat deck with a crowd of oilskin-coated figures on her bridge.

As we pass she rolls violently away from us and the friendly greeting of a waved hand from her bridge is suddenly metamorphosed into a wild clutch for safety at the canvas dodger.

It needs no wizard to tell us that his one thought is :  
' Thank Heaven ! It's your funeral now ! '

Once we have left the shelter of the land and some thousands of miles intervene between us and the American continent, the seas, breaking furiously over the strong ebb, play old Harry with us.

We try taking them dead ahead and they embrace and love us for it. We try taking them on the port bow and that is a little better, but there is a definite limit to that course, represented by a shoal. We try them on the beam so as to shake ourselves free of the land and the ungrateful wench tries to jerk us into the drink.

No matter how we take these seas there is no rest or ease for any of us anywhere, but in the engine-room it must be just hell.

Down in the galley our old chef, Pittick, who has been at sea for nearly fifty years, is found taking an unexpected bath in the soup which he is preparing for dinner. His language draws the respectful admiration of the most seasoned of us. Someone has failed to batten down the forecastle hatches properly and there is not a dry cot fit to sleep in. In the cabins the drawers are lying on the floors and sponges are embracing shirts.

Number One's opinion is that there is ' a hell of a pot mess.'

Our value as an anti-submarine device has almost disappeared, but this is of little importance since in

this weather no submarine could attempt to pass through the channel we are supposed to guard.

Really we are defeated, but we are singularly unwilling to admit our uselessness, so still we turn and face the unwearied seas while the wisest course to adopt during the rapidly approaching night is being decided.

In these days and nights of war the black-out that holds the lowliest homes of Britain in its grasp has stretched its far-reaching tentacles to the 'coastwise lights of England' as well. With a bitter night in prospect and not a gleam of light to indicate the proximity of land, the risk is obvious. It would be easy to shape a course which would take us far away from the danger area; then, hove-to, we could spend an uncomfortable but comparatively safe night. During this time the weather might light up and, towards morning, a scrap of moon would come to help us. But such freedom from immediate anxiety could only be purchased at the cost of leaving the patrol area and the complete eclipse of any value our patrol might hold.

On the other hand, we might be more ready for emergencies if we anchored in the channel itself where the present southerly wind would be blanketed to some extent. There it would be vital to watch for any sudden shift of wind which would entail getting under way and clearing out to sea—no easy task when surrounded by shoals, rocks, and steep-to cliffs, and at the mercy of a strong tide sweeping us in an uncertain direction.

The decision finally arrived at is that it is wisest to head straight out to sea and return to the patrol area as soon as the weather moderates.

It is to be my middle watch to-night, and ever since the half-mug of stew, which represents the eight o'clock dinner of normal times, I have been doing a little sum in my head. It runs something like this : ' If I turn in at half-past nine and am turned out at a quarter to twelve, that means nearly three hours' sleep. After the watch is over I should be snugly stowed away by four-fifteen and, as I won't be turned out before seven, that means a total of nearly six hours' sleep for the night. That won't be doing so badly. Compared with the fellow who has the morning watch I shall be in clover.'

So, in spite of the inducements offered but not realized by the wardroom, punctually at nine-thirty I make for the cabin right aft which I share with Turner. Here I am faced with another problem : ' Shall I have a bath before turning in, or wait until I turn out in the morning ? '

Since it is easier to decide to have a bath when one is wide awake than when half-asleep snuggled up among the bedclothes, I make up my mind to have it before sleeping.

Thanks to the gymnastic display entailed that bath makes me half an hour later in getting to bed than I had intended. Still, I stretch happily beneath the bedclothes and do my sum over again, only to recognize that there can be barely two hours of sleep in front of me instead of the three I had promised myself. Well, never mind, I am clean and fresh and warm, which will materially shorten the dressing process in the morning. Fresh ! That is just the trouble ! If I had dropped into bed all frowsty as I was, I would have dropped off to sleep at once, but the effect of the hot

bath is that I am as wide awake as if I had completed the night in bed instead of just beginning a fragment of it.

Shortly, the chiming clock, which hangs on the cabin wall, strikes five bells, and now there are less than two hours of rest to be hoped for. If only I had a little more time I could pick up the book which always rests on the bedside table at my elbow and read myself to sleep. But that is one of the privileges of the man who spends the whole night in bed and can afford to waste an hour or two. What a fool I was to have that bath before coming to bed. What a fool! What . . . a . . . fool. . . .

‘Rise and shine! Rise and shine! Quarter to twelve and a hell of a night. Show a leg! Show a leg! Show a leg or a purser’s stocking!’

At the first sound of the voice I am awake and gazing with ill-concealed animosity at the tall, swaying figure in dripping oilskins which is filling the doorway with its bulk and the cabin with the raucous noise of its unmelodious shouting. ‘Shut up and clear out!’ is my greeting, but the caller is wily in the ways of the called. ‘Not before I see you on your hind legs,’ is his answer.

Since there is no help for it I clamber out of my bunk to realize to my astonishment that this end of the ship at any rate is behaving like a broncho buck-jumper as portrayed in the movies. Luckily my sea sense the night before had warned me to lay out my watch clothes and tuck them into the foot of my bed so that there might be no chance of finding them in a higgledy-piggledy confusion when the time came to put them on.

The night is bitterly cold ; there is no doubt of that even in the muggy atmosphere of the sleeping cabin. The sternest self-control and the remembrance of how well I was brought up are not sufficient to permit me to strip to the buff in the icy air and begin the process of dressing *ab initio*. So the warm pyjamas are left on and layer after layer of woolly clothing super-added, with the contortions of an all-in wrestler, until my watch coat is buttoned with difficulty over the mass. Then there is a hasty dive into the wardroom for a cup of Bovril out of a thermos flask.

As eight bells are striking I mount the ladder leading to the wheelhouse and step into a black-out 'black as Egypt's night.'

Little by little my eyes become accustomed to the darkness and the windows of the wheelhouse begin to show as lighter patches broken by dark smudges which are the figures of the watch being relieved. There should be a lighter patch as well which is a doorway, but as that is not visible I guess it must be blocked by someone. Going towards it my doubt is dispelled for I brush against a figure which is gazing earnestly through the night glasses at something to windward.

'What have you got there?' I ask.

'Some P.B.N. ["Poor Bloody Neutral"] hove-to like ourselves, but he doesn't seem to be altering his bearing much. However, that's your show now! There is nothing much to turn over. We have been hove-to since ten-thirty ; it is no longer a question of returning to the patrol, but of safeguarding the ship. The depth, according to the last reading of the echometer, is twenty fathoms, and as long as we don't shallow to fifteen we should be clear of trouble. The captain



is to be called if the weather worsens, but I don't see how it can. Good-night, and think of me sometimes, snoring between the blankets below.'

Dim shadows are altering their positions in the wheel-house and at the ends of the bridge as the new watch take up their assigned billets. I ask the names of the look outs on the bridge to starboard and port and on the depth-charges aft. When I have got the names correctly and arranged for the shifts at each hour it is time to ask the helmsman: 'How is her head?'

This routine question is answered correctly and I go out on the bridge to take stock of the situation.

Here the darkness is lightened by the white crests of the breaking waves and it is possible that one might be able to see another darkened ship if it were not more than a hundred yards away. Our own ship is a thing of absolute darkness as she crashes up and down the seas. The navigation lights are extinguished or so thoroughly screened that the effect is as if they had no existence. I know that there is a look out at the other end of the bridge, chiefly because I know he ought to be there, but partly because, for the moment, his silhouette was shown in relief against the spray beyond.

The ship herself seems to be all right. Her way through the water is negligible, and purposely so. Any attempt at forcing her passage would inevitably bring some of these combers crashing their tons of water on the foredeck. One or two of them might be encountered with impunity, but a succession of them could have but one result—a result we have no desire to accomplish since the Admiralty formula for announcing it became stereotyped: *The Secretary of*

*the Admiralty regrets to announce that the patrol vessel Nonsuch is very much overdue and must be considered lost. The next of kin of casualties have been informed.*

Only a few lines in an obscure corner of the morning newspaper, scarcely glanced at by the general public, and only of interest to the relatives who 'have been informed,' and your opposite number on the patrol who curse a bit because they know their work will be doubled until your relief arrives.

The pretence of being on patrol, as has been said, has been abandoned. If the Hun should think on this account that this is his moment, he is welcome to it as far as we are concerned. Any attempt to take advantage of the opportunity will convince him, for all time, that, in spite of the claims of his misleaders, Great Britain is still an island and our natural defence is still the sea. Unfortunately, he will not live to pass on his dearly bought information, so it is to be expected that others will pass the way he went. But that knowledge does permit us to make the safety of our ship the first consideration on such a night as this.

For it is, as my router-out remarked, a hell of a night. There is motion enough to try the most sea-proof stomach, and progress in any direction on board is impossible unless holding firmly to some solid structure. My usual promenade of thirty feet across the bridge—an exercise that has whiled away many hours of night watches—is out of the question as a blind stagger and a couple of severe bruises have convinced me.

On the weather side of the bridge, vision consists of uneasy blinks between cataracts of spray, but in the shelter of the lee side of the wheel-house there is vision which is good enough for all practical purposes,

i.e. I know without any need of argument that the ship is still right side up when the various structures on the fore-deck emerge from the sea which has just submerged them.

It is cold ; it is horribly wet. The constant motion and the muscular effort necessitated by the strain of keeping more or less upright are exhausting to the degree that compels a dangerous tendency to sleep standing up with one's eyes wide open. There is sufficient risk in the storm and the service on which we are employed to make one wonder what the morrow may bring, if it brings anything to us at all. There is constant, carking care in the realization that we are steaming without navigation lights in a much frequented highway of the sea where, in all probability, there are other vessels also steaming without lights and trusting to the smartness of the look outs to avoid collision.

Then I begin to wonder what we elderly men are doing here at all. In our mess we are all past the limits of military age. There are plenty of much younger grandfathers. Yet the call of the sea was so strong and insistent that we wangled the opportunity to get back to our first love the moment war broke out and look upon our success as the greatest stroke of luck that has ever happened to us.

What is it that brings us back to sit in messes and talk the language we understand to the only men who know what we mean in the queer jargon which rouses us to insensate wrath when mishandled by the interloper ? Why should we feel absolutely at home under conditions that would not be tolerated for a moment by other men of our, or any, age ?



TEMPORARY LIEUT. JOHN R. MUIR, M.B. F.R.C.S.(Ed.),  
R.N.V.R.



Frankly, I do not know.

One fellow who wrote as if he knew all about it said that the sailor hated the sea, but loved ships. I do not believe that he had discovered the whole truth, though there is a speciousness about the statement that sounds convincing. The sea is entirely impersonal and bathes or drowns you with equal indifference. Still, it is possible to love an object which is entirely impersonal, though none can say that a ship is impersonal. The proudest man on earth is the one who can talk about 'MY' ship, and, when he embarks on board his personal love and watches the manner in which she deals with his impersonal love, he hopes to find both loves justified. Otherwise he gives up the personal love, and, in most cases, by doing so he abandons the other. Only to come back and renew the experiment when the sting of the first betrayal has worn off. And again after that.

Meantime I am keeping an anxious look out on the neutral on our starboard bow. An occasional glance at the pelorus satisfies me that the bearing has not materially altered since taking over the watch and that, sooner or later, something will have to be done about it. That he is a neutral there can be no doubt. High above his bridge is a brilliantly illuminated sign which proclaims his nationality to all within sight, and the same design is pathetically repeated over his wheel-box aft. I say 'pathetically' advisedly, because these appeals to the Hun to spare the lives of neutral seamen are pathetic in their complete failure to induce the German to spare a single one of them in this or the last war. . . . So powerful is the German naval tradition of indiscriminate murder on the high seas.

The most curious fact that emerges from a consideration of these appeals is that the neutral owner seems much more annoyed by the exercise of our contraband control, which only touches his pocket, than by the sinking of his ships and the drowning of his scamen. It is supposed that, if we copied the German, the neutral owner could draw his insurance money and be perfectly satisfied although the unfortunates who manned the vessels might not be so complacent.

The present ship may guess at our existence, but he has nothing to confirm his suspicions, so it is my responsibility to act before the risk of collision becomes imminent. That he may have warning of my position and course the navigation lights are switched on and he is watched for a moment to see whether he maintains his course and speed before deciding on the best way to clear him, which should be to pass under his stern as we are the giving way ship.

There is no sign from the neutral ship, but with appalling suddenness, a green light appears on our starboard bow not more than a couple of hundred yards away. That rapidly rising and falling green light has the fascination the green eyes of a snake are supposed to possess, and I stare at it half-hypnotized. My subconscious mind tells me that there is no real danger, as the vessels are bound to pass clear of one another, though the margin of safety is smaller than I care about. It is clear that one of the sudden dangers of wartime has been sprung upon us and that we have fallen in with one of the vessels of the adjacent patrol. With straining eyes I try to identify the ship, but, beyond an indefinite grey mass which suggests a destroyer, recognition is impossible, although a flick

of the recognition signals and the immediate answer assure us that she is British.

During the time this little episode is taking place not a word has passed on board our own vessel. Only a slight stiffening, sensed rather than seen, in the attitude of the look out nearest me indicates that he has seen the green light at the same moment as myself. There is a gradual relaxation of the tension as the light crawls slowly along our beam and, just as suddenly as it appeared, is switched off as it passes under our stern. Then our own navigation lights are switched off as I turn to deal with the neutral.

Any anxiety lest the gale that was raging might hamper our movements is completely dissipated. Looking over the dodger that shelters the bridge I find that I am staring dead to windward in the teeth of a gale that no longer exists. The wind has died down with the abruptness of a blown-out candle. Such a sudden change usually portends, in British waters at any rate, a renewal of the gale with increased violence from the north-west. Meanwhile the seas are rapidly losing their breaking crests, so, in order to be ready for the new blow when it comes, and to be rid of this troublesome neutral once and for all, the helmsman is ordered to alter course sixteen points. Soon the neutral, with his blaze of light, is dead astern, and of no more interest.

When there is nothing further to be feared from his vicinity it is time to have a look at the echometer and then go below to the chartroom. There, in some fashion or other, I reconcile the depth found with the supposed drift and course during the storm. These give a round idea of the ship's position, and from there



an approximately safe course can be laid back to the patrol area. This completed I come back to the wheel-house, give the helmsman the new course, wait until I am told she is 'On,' and see that she is taking the new course fairly comfortably, and then go to the clock to time the new course and make the necessary log entries. It seems that hours must have elapsed since taking over the deck, but that wretched piece of mechanism shows that only one and a quarter hours have gone past. There are still two and three-quarter hours between me and relief.

The fatal defect of all watches kept at sea is their monotony and consequent boredom. Do what you will ; gaze as long and earnestly as your eyes will permit at the surface of every passing wave to ensure that its hollows do not conceal a lurking enemy ; tramp with purposeful feet from one side of the bridge to the other in order to keep an eye on the look outs and see that they are on the top line of wakefulness and efficiency ; go to the upper deck and compare the standard with the steering compass so that you may be sure that the appointed course is being made good ; take a bearing of some distant point, and from that, with the aid of your echometer, calculate your exact position ; make a short note in your rough log of all these findings and you are lucky if you have filled up ten of the two hundred and forty minutes that are to go. Repeat these routine duties every hour, it would be sheer nonsense in the ordinary way to do them more frequently, and still there are two hundred minutes, each of them crammed to repletion with sixty seconds of darkness, to be got rid of somehow. They pass with leaden feet.

There is a space of thirty feet on the bridge where one can promenade to one's heart's content. A simple calculation shows that by traversing this distance to and fro for fifty times I cover the equivalent of a walk of a quarter of a mile. Generally I make a point of completing it once during each hour of the watch. In the dark, when there is much movement, ten minutes to this quarter of a mile of exercise is reasonably good going and the time occupied accounts for some of the leaden minutes. With the swell and cross seas that are running at present my attempt at a promenade is brought to an abrupt conclusion by a violent collision with the look out on the starboard side of the bridge. It is impossible to take any form of exercise that involves a humiliating apology at the expiry of every twelve seconds, to say nothing of the material damage to one's hide. On this occasion my walk degenerates into a blind stagger into a corner where I can no longer be a threat to the safety of my fellow-men.

It is imperative to fall back on one of the other methods of passing the weary moments which I reserve for the periods of supreme boredom.

The first and most important of these is to tap with my fingers in the Morse code the inspiring sentence that 'Frowzy quacks, jump, vex, and bite.' I hope it is needless for me to say that I have no intention of disturbing the great company of quacks by asserting that, in my opinion, I am giving a *précis* of their habits. The only virtue in this sentence is that it is the shortest group of words in the English language to convey a meaning and also include most of the letters of the alphabet. As such it is, to my mind at any rate,

superior to the rival statement that 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.'

Both have the great virtue of preventing one from getting rusty in signalling either by Morse or Semaphore, and I can assure you that, for some reason or other with which I am unacquainted, I am less likely to be viewed with suspicion by my fellow-watch-keepers if I adopt the first sentence when recalling the Semaphore signals. Morse keeps one's fingers from being frozen stiff on a cold night, while Semaphore is calculated to warm up the chilliest watch-keeper, notably when he catches the signalman of the watch smiling at his efforts.

The minor duties of watch-keeping do give me some little employment, but the sole occupation of the others is to stare steadily seaward and report anything unusual. They cannot converse, and smoking cigarettes in the teeth of wind, rain, and spray can give but little comfort.

There is one lad whose profile, seen in the dark, is like no other profile I have ever seen by daylight in its wooden suggestion of complete vacuity, and yet he is a highly intelligent lad, though he has never reported anything until I have been conscious of it for some time. He, there are many like him, seems to sleep standing on his feet; long custom, apparently, permitting him to remain upright no matter how wildly the deck is swaying. The exciting possibility that, at any moment, an enemy submarine may break surface before his eyes has lost all the charm of novelty, and I am convinced that, like the rest of us in wartime, he has lost all sense of the personal aspects of the conflict.

I have tapped my fingers until I find that I am



TEMPORARY LIEUT. CHARLES E. TURNER, R.N.V.R.



automatically registering the letters without any mental effort whatsoever, and I have shrugged my shoulders in a faint indication of the Semaphore position until I am sure that the look out nearest me thinks, if he thinks at all, that I am clean daft. Now I look hopefully, in the flicker of a dimmed torch, at the dial of the wheel-house clock. For a second there is a wild hope that the confounded thing has stopped, since it points to a quarter-past two only, but the second hand is moving, so I must accept the statements of the other hands at their face value.

The expected renewal of the gale from the north-west has duly taken place and there is a vicious crest from that direction over-running the old swell from the south-west, making the motion still too violent to permit my thirty-foot walk. But the new gale promises some protection as we approach the weather shore. By and by, perhaps before the watch is over, it may be possible to get some relief for my chilled extremities from a short period of violent exertion. Since there is no way of preventing it, the ship is smothered in showers of fine spray when the bows meet the cross seas every minute or so, and the bowed heads of the look outs are presented to the weather as often as their faces.

Suddenly, out of the gloom that is England a light appears and is gone in a second. Before the impression of the direction is lost my head is bent over the pelorus and my brain is automatically counting at the rate I fondly imagine represents a figure to each second: 'One . . . two . . . three . . . four. . . .' Again the flash pierces the darkness. This time the correct bearing is registered while the automatic estimating

of the period is repeated. There can be no doubt about it. For some reason or other, perhaps the passing of a convoy or a man-of-war of more than usual importance, one of the lighthouses on our beat has been lit. It is up to us to gain all the benefit we can from this fortunate happening. We have got the bearing correctly and the estimated distance cannot be very far out. With the depth registered by the echometer, the other data are taken to the chartroom and laid off. Within limits they agree fairly well, so a course that will rapidly bring us into less troubled waters is decided upon with every confidence.

Although nothing has been said, there is not a man on watch who does not know what the light and the alteration of the course mean. One can see in the altered bearing of the groups an indication of the hope that the sodden misery of the past hours is at length drawing to a close.

The showers of spray are getting less frequent and less insistent in the manner in which they seek the weak points in our oilskins. The same power that ordered the lighthouse to be lit has ordered its extinction, but not before a four-point bearing has confirmed the estimation of our position, and now our echometer may be trusted to give us plenty of warning of the approach of shoals—our only danger. So we proceed happily enough, except for that thrice-cursed clock, which must surely have stopped this time since it is only showing a quarter-past three.

Now that there are only three-quarters of an hour to go, I take the advice given me at the change of the watch and think of my relief, in a warm bunk, lying on his back and snoring as if to waken the dead.

Soon, ever so soon, and every second brings it nearer, I, in my turn, will call him up to 'Rise and shine!' And won't the blankets be warm and snug and comforting after the chill blasts of this icy night, when I know that nothing short of 'Action Stations!' can haul me out for at least three hours.

My stiffened muscles, by this time almost paralysed, relax luxuriously at the bare prospect. Mentally I debate whether to consider the bath of the night before as a wash-out, and have another before turning in, though thereby losing another half-hour of precious sleep. No decision on this important subject is arrived at, because a quiet voice suddenly breaks in on the silence of nearly four hours with: 'Everything all right, I suppose? The wind seems to have taken off a lot.'

In the shelter of the lee wheel-house door Davey, Commanding Officer, is peering out into the darkness. 'Everything all right, sir,' I answer, and give a short account of the major happenings during the watch. A few minutes later he retires to his temporary bunk in the deck saloon and I note with delight that the clock has got a move on at last and that the time is now half-past three.

The last half-hour of the middle watch. Thanks to the weather shore, some form of exercise is now possible, and I stumble blindly around the bridge, finding all kinds of obstacles which in daylight had never revealed their existence. Feet, elbows, and buttocks all receive their appointed whacks, but when I consult the clock I find that I have completed the course in the record time of nine minutes and that there are still five minutes to go.



For the last time I traduce the quack tribe and condemn lazy dogs. The helmsman thinks I have gone to sleep, and the look out, whose duty it is to call the watch, suggestively lingers near me as he passes, as if he thought I had unaccountably forgotten something and was in two minds whether he should remind me or not.

Forgotten ! The minute hand is pointing to the quarter and for the first time for an hour there is an air of suppressed liveliness on the bridge. It is difficult to smother a suggestion of elation in my own voice as I give the eagerly awaited order : ‘ Call the watch ! ’

## CHAPTER SIX

THE SEVERITY OF the winter months made the work of the Auxiliary Patrol service abnormally difficult. For days on end there were many degrees of frost. On land there were daily deaths from the cold, transport was disorganized, domestic services and supplies disabled. Continual snow was accompanied by high winds. It is difficult to imagine weather that could cause more hardship. It had not the inconvenience to seamen of continual fog, but it made far greater inroads upon their stamina, their patience, and their courage. And *Campeador* was a pleasure ship, built and designed for fair-weather cruising with every facility within easy reach.

There were few excitements, and some were too grave to allow any light relief. There was a crisis in the engine-room which would have been grave in normal circumstances and weather, and in a ship not carrying depth charges.

A ton and a half of water came down the funnel and poured through the vents into the engine-room. *Campeador* took a list of from 18° to 27°. She seemed, said Yersin, 'to rise about 20 feet every half-minute. We had trouble with the engines and had to fit big-ends with a penknife owing to a shortage of tools in the early stages.'

This laconic statement of the facts will cause no

engineer and certainly no sailor to minimize the gravity of that crisis at sea in the rigours of the winter of 1939-40.

On another occasion 'we were flying a kite when the engines were put into reverse with such suddenness that the vibration caused a short circuit behind the switchboard. Forward in the cook's galley the batteries blew up. The storeroom was wrecked. The cook and the steward had just left it. They had a remarkable escape from what must have been serious injury.'

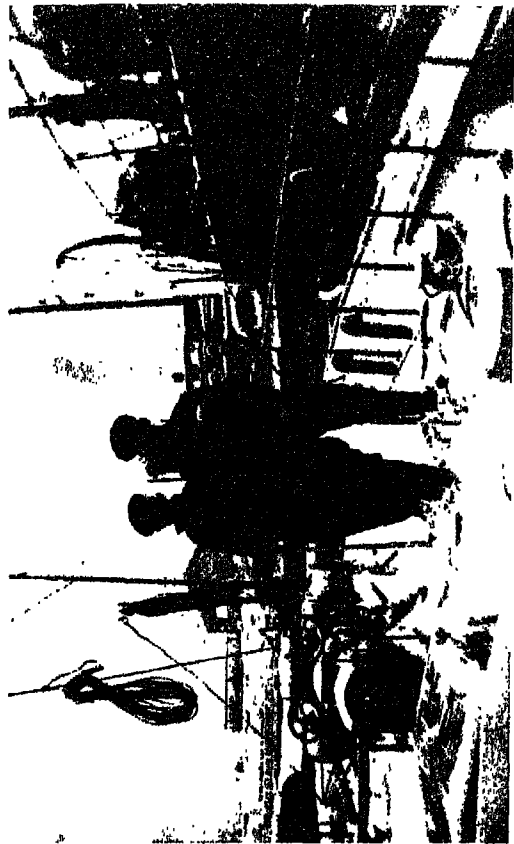
The reversal of engines had been necessary in order to prevent an aeroplane flying into the kite astern.

Once at midnight enemy planes, which were frequently overhead, dropped a dozen magnetic mines by parachute. Some went off three cables astern and shook the little ship violently. *Campeador* marked the places where the mines fell, but they were signalled to drop anchor as it was unsafe to proceed.

The cold and the rough weather told upon all. Everyone suffered from colds and sore throats. Muir's medical knowledge was valuable. The stamina of the four veterans astonished all. The hours were long because they were short-handed and there was no red, white, and blue watch.

The thermometer in the engine-room, where black-out precautions made ventilation and air draught almost impossible, stood at freezing point. Freezing point in the sheltered engine-room of a ship just off the English coast.

Commander Davey bought blankets for all. There were only small electric fires in the ward-room and



F. W. COLEMAN AND S. G. VERCOE

Two of the ratings shovelling snow during the rigorous winter of 1939-40



forecastle for the crew, but 'the men were grand, however cold it might be.'

*Campeador's* Commander kept fit by doing exercises on deck, even in the bitter cold, until he, too, caught a chill. 'It was so cold that handkerchiefs actually froze as we blew our noses.'

Brimilcombe, the Chief Petty Officer, writing to Mrs. Beard, the garden of whose property at Ringmore he tended so lovingly, said: 'Well what do you think of this perishing weather it is terrible the ship is covered in ice got a Job to stand any where and we have just come in from sea in harbour for a few hours and I'm not sorry its enough to cut anyone in two at sea I can't remember it ever being so cold the mast and rigging is covered with icicles pretty to gaze on.'

During these months, Yersin writes: 'I talked many times to Lieutenant Turner and said how I was longing for a few days with my wife. He didn't seem to understand until he was married a few months later. Then he was the keenest of us all to get ashore.'

On November 5, 1939, Muir wrote to me acknowledging some more books, mostly travel and biography. 'They are very popular because (I wonder whether it is symptomatic of the present generation!) the tastes of all our complement run in the direction of that style of literature rather than the so-called "crime" books. All your books are in circulation and being well-thumbed during some of the silent watches when there is nothing to do except keep an occasional watch on a bearing or a shore signal station.

'Had horrible weather during the past few days; blowing a full gale with piercing cold. However, to-day the sun is shining and we are hoping to get in

and find some letters waiting us. I am beginning to feel like an old friend who was in command of a ship in the 10th Cruiser squadron during the last war. He complained that there were three things he never saw for the duration of the war ; an enemy, a gun fired in anger, or the shore.'

During these fierce winter months leave was expected daily, but it did not come. The 'little ships which bear the brunt of the enemy's attack by torpedo, mine, and bomb' were safeguarding vital shipping, meeting and resisting the heavy waves of U-boat warfare that were flung against Britain in the first months of the war. Often they could not be relieved.

As Christmas Day approached hopes were high, but they were confounded. But the spirit of the men who had already endured three months of an abnormally severe winter was undimmed. Even the day itself was not allowed to pass in peace. Just before lunch, which included the traditional turkey, a valve blew out in the starboard engine-room. 'Therefore,' as one records good-humouredly, 'no Xmas lunch till 3 p.m. Cold but good.'

On Boxing Day Muir wrote :

'Nancy [Mrs. Muir] went off a few days ago to spend Christmas with some friends under the impression that I might be able to follow her for the Christmas night at any rate, but this fog, which the papers dare not mention, put considerable extra strain on our patrol, so that leave was ruled out and we spent our Christmas at sea trying to intimate to the P.B.N. [Poor Bloody Neutrals] their precise positions in the fog—being all the time more than a bit doubtful as to our own.

'However, it seemed to work out all right, as all they wanted to do was to get out to sea while we wanted to make the land—which is a hell of a difference. Finally, we anchored on a bank and prayed either that Providence would lift the fog or the lighthouse keepers would recognize that navigation was impossible until they started their fog siren going.

'Needless to say the latter event happened first, so that we were able to get in in time for our Xmas dinner to be eaten in the comparative peace of ship's bells, hooters, and all the other concatenations that accompany a fog at sea. We kept them off by the simple process of listening until we could hear the voices on the approaching ships and then shouting through a megaphone for them to get to hell out of it. We suppose they followed our instructions as none of them hit us.'

A few weeks after, Muir had a severe attack of influenza and bronchitis, and 'no sooner was I fit to stand on the bridge again when we were told off to escort a submarine and have been continually at sea for nearly a week. Hasn't the weather been awful? On watch at night has been actually painful. Like all steel ships, this one sweats like the devil in cold weather, with the result that the atmosphere down below is one of cold, clammy misery. To Heil with Hitler.'

There is no better way to record the attitude of the crew than to quote from the simple but moving letters of Brimicombe. They will find an echo in the heart of every sea-lover and every lover of the country.

'By what I can hear we shall be having an overall



in dock in about another month's time then I hope we shall be getting some more leave official Xmas leave the few days I had a fortnight ago dosent count so may get 10 days then I hope so that will be about the end of February if everything turns out as planned so as I can go and have a good look at the old ranch [the garden he tended for Mrs. Beard]. The longer I am away from it the more eager I am to see it—yes, my sister was very excited when I arrived home . . . she was there waiting for me with a good hot meal something very tasty you know quite different from what you get on board ship if I get home next month I will put the gooseberries in then it wont be too late, I hope you get a couple of days off for the extra work you done Xmas so as you can run down to Ringmore you don't want to worry about a bed plenty in my place Just unlock the door walk in and light the fire and make yourself at home. . . .'

In March *Campeador* had a little respite from her buffetings and almost ceaseless patrol. She put into Southampton for refitting of engines and the fitting of a gun for'ard. A number of the crew left the ship and others were taken aboard, mostly from Grimsby. Three grand weeks ashore supervising the work. Afterwards she was 2 ft. lower in the water, which did not increase her ease of handling or make life any less hazardous. It was in part responsible for some minor mishaps which, despite their inconvenience, were dismissed as incidents, as they were by comparison with the hourly hazards of the night patrol.

Later there were to be three 'even better weeks when,' to quote Yersin, 'I was able to get home.

Never has the early Spring in Devon seemed so beautiful.'

Brimilcombe wrote : ' I had a good week-end at Ringmore visited the ranch and all the trees we put in were in bud and looking grand . . . I cut the grass while I was home and put it all in order before I left so now I hope when you go down Whitsun it will look nice and tidy.

' I am going home to-morrow for a week-end come back again Tuesday so I shall be able to have a look at the ranch again and spend a few quiet moments there nice and quiet . . . I was ever so pleased to hear that Don had took his course and passed good luck to him he deserves all he got and I shant be a bit surprised to hear any time that he has got a commission Just that sort that deserves it yes we shall have to sir him then and also salute him . . . I am going to try a drop of Devon to-morrow.'

And in the next month, May : ' I am keeping in the pink at present we are having some lovely weather lately its a pleasure to be at sea after what we went through last winter. . . . I agree about all the Dockyards and Ordnance and munition works should work all the time when everyone, army, navy and air force are up against it as you say we don't get no bank holidays every day is the same to us now these times we have got a hard struggle before us but I think we shall win through alright the war seems to have started proper now : we have got to wait to see what Mussolini is going to do he seems to be a bit half-hearted about it but every one seems to think he will go against us a fool if he does because he has got everything to lose by coming against us. I shall be glad

when it is all over as you say and we will have a grand reunion on the ranch if we are all spared, yes we are kept very busy lately on the alert because you never know what that old Devil of Hitler will try to do next. I expect the gardens round your way are looking nice. . . . I expect the trees are looking nice on the ranch. . . .'

And later : 'Yes, our craft is doing very well up to now keeping clear of the devilries, yes things have been moving quickly this last week or so well I think now he is having his last big gamble and it wont Just come off quite different from Austria or Poland this time and I expect the old Devil knows it by this time. I would like to have him on the ranch for a month I would make him dig night and day all the weeds and make him eat them as well, yes I expect you have plenty of refugees they all seem to fly to this old country as you say they have got colonies of their own to go to. no as you say after spurning our advice and then when they were in danger the first ones to cry to us, well never mind I hope it will all be over this year and we will be able to have our grand reunion I hope on the ranch . . . as you say they are doing wonderful work our air force they are the envy of the world if only we have a few thousand more you see we got to keep such a big force in Egypt and other places to watch old Spagetti face Musso he dosent seem to know hardly which side to Jump if he do make a mistake in Jumping he has got everything to lose. I was pleased with the news last evening when he said they were going to Conscript every one and everything and a good Job too I don't think the people have been taking things serious enough but

S. Brignilcombe H. J. Feb.

P. Bortell

With our best wishes for  
Christmas 1939  
20 Venice. Cornwall  
May God bless you & protect you.  
Lt. R. Dymallyon  
Elizabeth R. George R.I.  
W. E. Pitt

SIGNATURES OF SOME OF THE CREW

On the Greeting Card from the King and Queen, Christmas 1939

navigation one would seek the shelter of the charthouse and pass the night in a moderate - very moderate - degree of comfort but an enemy vessel could not be spotted through the glass and the split second which allows you to avoid collision with one of your own darkened vessels would be lost. So we stand outside in the spray and the wind, peer and curse, say this is the most damnable war we have ever experienced, and, when our relief turns up dive down below to get most of the four hours sleep allotted to us. And then the wretched navigator is routed out just when he is dropping off to give a course or to be asked what the alteration of this or that may be. Of course he doesn't know and has to get up and mug up the confidential orders again.

But, by Jove! I wouldn't be anywhere else in the world not even for a 1918 war profiteer's fortune.

Every good wish. Please let me have an idea how Cook is going. I'm a bit anxious.

Yours,

John R. Muir

PART OF A LETTER, DATED OCTOBER 25, 1939, FROM  
LIEUTENANT JOHN R. MUIR TO THE AUTHOR



they will have to I was also pleased to hear that all munitions working and factorys and Dockyards are to work 7 days a week quite right to and why shouldnt they because after all we got all the dangerous work to do and all the buffeting about and not much comfort which they have got. I hope you don't get too vicious when you see them german beast have another fag instead it soothes the nerves.'

When at anchor the black-out precautions were frequently taken from the portholes to give ventilation. Once when this had been done a boat passed and the wash flooded the cabin belonging to the engineers, Yersin and Trafford. The water was 3 feet deep in the cabin and had washed over the bunks.

Lieutenant Turner was highly amused and his amusement was not resented, even by the sufferers. He knew his shipmates, and they knew him—thoroughly. Even with shipmates with whom he did not quite fit, he was always good-natured, making more than full allowance for the other man's idiosyncracies. Turner demanded full liberty of ideas and accorded the same privilege to others. Any meanness of mind, however, he could not stand. Economy in expenditure, yes, but not mean-mindedness in money matters. In many ways he was extravagant, and always in his sailing life nothing had been too good for his boats, within the means at his disposal. 'Good enough' was never 'Good' with him; things had to be shipshape, both aboard and in daily life.

So he took the laugh with relish when, a few weeks later, H.M.S. *Philanti* passed and flooded the cabins of Turner and MacAndrew through the open portholes. After that officers decided that it was wiser to

endure the stuffiness, and later on the heat, rather than risk repetition of that inconvenience.

Occasionally *Campeador's* men were able to forget the ever-present danger of mines and aeroplanes, submarines and enemy ships. There were times when they stood on deck in the calm, peaceful spring weather and they found it difficult to believe that they were at war. But such reveries were never allowed to last long. The buzzer would go and immediately all men were at 'Action Stations.'

Occasionally there was the excitement of visitors aboard ; at Portsmouth the Commander and a Lieutenant-Commander from H.M.S. *Sultan*, the 'Mother' ship, came aboard to help fit new exhausts in place of the funnel.

On June 19, Brimilcombe went to Lieutenant Yersin and asked him if he would help him make out his will. He seemed to have a premonition that he would not return. 'He told me that he had not much longer in this life, but he was sure that I would come safely through.'

On the night of Friday, June 21, Muir and Yersin went aboard the *Star of India*. There was a warm comradeship between these men.

'A memory which I treasure,' Yersin told me, 'is of early morning tea. Lieutenant Muir was in the next cabin to me and he used to come into our cabin and share my bunk while we drank our tea and listened to the news at 7 a.m.'

Aboard the *Star of India* Muir found Surgeon-Lieutenant Miller, whose father he had known. It was a pleasant evening. They returned early to *Campeador*. It was a gentle summer night.

But at midnight, riding at anchor, they heard enemy planes go over. 'We had a crack at them, but we were unlucky.'

The mines dropped by these planes were probably the cause of the next morning's disaster.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

SATURDAY MORNING, JUNE 22, 1940. *Campeador V* had survived nine months of war. She had a record of efficiency and independence that was the talk of the Patrol service. The endurance and unconquerable cheerfulness of her veterans, and their skill, had won the respect of all who encountered her.

Only two men can complete the history of *Campeador V*.

I leave it to Engineer-Lieutenant Yersin :

'A fine warm sunny morning with a slight swell running. Everyone full of beans as we were to put into Portsmouth on the Monday for four days' leave. Incidentally Trafford and I had learned that we were to change over from T.124, under which we had been serving, and were then Lieut. (E) R.N.V.R. Admiral Muir and I had planned to celebrate at the Queen's in Portsmouth.

'It was about 9 a.m., we had finished breakfast, and were setting out on patrol, and I had placed Coleman on watch in the engine-room. All the deck officers were on watch—Commander Davey, Lieutenant MacAndrew, Lieutenant Turner, and Lieutenant Muir. I had intended remaining in the engine-room, too, but as I was swotting on Diesel engines, I decided to do it in the fresh air.

'I had just pulled a chair on the quarter-deck, sat down, and was opening my book, when without *any*

warning I was shot into the air and came down on the quarter-deck again. It was like awakening suddenly from a doze. The ship was struck amidships, and I saw hundreds of pieces of the ship in the air. The bow had gone. I landed on the quarter-deck, and saw Leading Gunner Veale, who had been getting paint from the bosun's locker, preparatory to painting the gun. He had blood pouring from his head. I caught hold of him by the scruff of his neck, and flung him over my shoulder into the sea. Then everything seemed to fall on top of me. My tunic was ripped off by a davit and I was thrown into the water. Everything happened so quickly. I remember thinking it was strange that I was covered in grey and red—evidently the paint and blood—but I couldn't think where it had come from.

'I remember seeing a launch falling on me, and I put up my hand to ward it off, and as my arm was being forced backwards with the weight, a wave came and carried it away.

'Then I was swimming for my life. The suction was terrific. Luckily I am a powerful swimmer, but I seemed to make no headway. I did manage at last to reach part of the Carley float, which looked just like a huge towel which had been wrung out. I looked round, but could not see well as my eye was damaged, and a cut above was bleeding profusely. I heard two men shouting—the gunner Veale, who was holding a piece of wood, and a young deck hand, who was among the wreckage. I tried to get to him, but it was impossible owing to the floating wreckage. Also my left side was quite numb by this time, as so much wreckage had fallen on me. I shouted to the men

to stop yelling, and hang on, and save their breath as help was coming. I tried to paddle towards the seaman, but I couldn't make it, and the poor chap went down. It was ghastly.

'All this time I was trying with all my might to see or hear signs of any other survivors, but there were none. The whole ship was gone in a minute; all aboard must have been killed instantly by the concussion. There could have been no one trapped and drowned.

'H.M.S. *Wilna* and minesweepers came towards us, but I was picked up by the lifeboat of H.M.S. *Wilna*. I begged them to look for other survivors, but only myself and Vcale were left. As we were steaming away from what had been a grand yacht but half an hour before, another mine went off astern, and the lifeboat shuddered. Those who saw the catastrophe said it was just like an enormous wave breaking over a rock.'

Commander A. A. D. Smyth, R.N. (retd.), Commanding H.M.S. *Wilna*, gave me these details :

'It was a great grief to me when she went up and those four fine old fellows went west. All were well into their 60's—I believe Muir was the eldest of the four—and they were a happy family, content to stay at sea as long as the ship could do so, whatever the weather.

'*Campeador* was our opposite number at the time she was lost.

'On the night of June 21-22, German planes had been laying a number of magnetic mines in our neighbourhood and I noted with some satisfaction that one of these mines exploded in the air, blowing its plane to bits.

'At 8.50 a.m. the *Campeador* was blown up some two miles from us and I at once went full speed to the spot. She had disappeared completely within about half a minute (magnetic mines are big and destructive), and when we reached the scene we found a quantity of wreckage lying flat on the surface, but only three objects raised above the surface. One was Yersin, one of the Engineers, who had climbed on to a Carley float, and whom we had seen from a distance trying, vainly, with the aid of a paddle, to reach someone whom he could see drowning and who had sunk before we arrived. Another object visible was a Leading Seaman named Veale, who was holding on to a door ; both he and Yersin were wounded and dazed.

'The third object was an upturned dinghy, which I did not investigate, as I wanted to get these two survivors to hospital as quickly as possible.

'The two men I picked up were on board within a quarter of an hour of the explosion. I collected a doctor from the nearest ship available and took them straight up harbour to hospital, where I heard they got on quite well.'

One of the officers of H.M.S. *Wilna* said that when they approached the scene Lieutenant Yersin was shouting to them to leave him alone as he was all right. He would not let them go near him until he was sure they could do nothing for anyone else. He was mad with grief at the loss of his brother officers and his incessant cry was for Lieutenant Muir.

He was very distressed because he feared that they had lost Veale, whom he had been able to assist at first, but was reassured when he learned that Veale had been picked up.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

THIS IS A personal sketch of *Campeador V* in terms of the men who gave her honour. It is fitting to complete it in personal terms.

Muir's last gift to his wife was a tiny anthology entitled *Courage*. It contains Elizabeth Barrett Browning's lines :

The little cares that fretted me  
I lost them yesterday  
Among the fields above the sea  
Among the winds at play . . .

Among the new mown hay.

Muir was always slightly depressed on Midsummer's Day, regretful that the summer was henceforward on the wane.

On June 21 he wrote to Mrs. Muir from *Campeador* that the scent of the new mown hay from the land was almost overpowering.

Some weeks before she had 'said my last farewell in brilliant sunshine the last time I saw him, when he looked so splendid as he gave me his final Naval salute.'

And later : 'I think now, after the terrible winter they went through, perhaps it was better—if it had to

be—that they should go on a bright summer morning when the world was looking its best. . . .’

Mighty victor, never vanquish’d,  
Bulwark of our native land . . .

Mirror bright of chivalry,  
Ruy, my Cid Campeador !

I quote from *The Cid. A Short Chronicle founded on the early Poetry of Spain*, by George Dennis (1845). A footnote to the verse says ‘“*Campeador*” is a term hardly translatable into English, for our word “champion,” to which it most nearly answers, excites little of that proud triumphant feeling which thrills the Spanish bosom at the mention of the “*Campeador*.”’

Surely this gallant yacht, built to be a rich man’s pleasure, was most appositely named.

## LIST OF FULL COMPLEMENT

### H.M.S. *CAMPEADOR V*

Commissioned	September 18, 1939
Taken in hand for conversion	March 6, 1940
Completed conversion	May 4, 1940
Sunk, presumably by mine	June 22, 1940

## OFFICIAL ADMIRALTY COMMUNIQUE

24.6.40.

The Secretary of the Admiralty regrets to announce that H.M. Yacht *Campeador V* (Commander C. H. Davey, O.B.E., R.N.) has been sunk by an enemy mine. The Commanding Officer, 3 Officers and 16 ratings are missing and it is feared that they have lost their lives. The next of kin have been informed.

## OFFICIAL ADMIRALTY COMMUNIQUE

13.7.40.

The Secretary of the Admiralty regrets to announce the following casualties sustained in H.M.S. *Campeador V*:

### OFFICERS

#### *Killed*

Temporary Lieutenant J. R. Muir, R.N.V.R.

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## *Missing, believed killed*

Commander C. H. Davey, O.B.E., R.N. (in command).  
 Temporary Lieutenant V. W. MacAndrew, R.N.V.R.  
 Temporary Lieutenant C. E. Turner, R.N.V.R.  
 Mr. C. A. Trafford, Engineer.

## *Wounded*

Mr. H. H. Yersin, Engineer.

## RATINGS

### *Killed*

Hyde, C. A. T.      Assistant Steward  
 (T.124)

### *Missing, presumed killed*

Ash, H. G.	Steward (T.124)	
Bexoby, Roy	Ordinary Signalman	P/JX.181882
Brimilcombe, Sidney	Petty Officer	Pension No. D.230527
Coleman, F. W.	Diesel Greaser (T.124)	
Cox, Alan	Ordinary Seaman, R.N.P.S.	LT/JX.185885
Gall, Chas. W.	Seaman, R.N.P.S.	LT/JX.187255
Gooch, Bertie R.	Seaman, R.N.P.S.	LT/X.21746A
Kelly, Andrew	2nd Hand, R.N.P.S.	LT/KX.187268
Kirk, W. J.	Seaman, R.N.P.S.	
Lakie, Alexander	Able Seaman	D/JX.145821
Lee, Chas. W.	Seaman	LT/KK.187234
Pittick, W. E.	Cook (T.124)	



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Taylor, Douglas G.	Able Seaman	D/JX.156740
Whitehead, George W. J.	Able Seaman	D/SSX.17612
	<i>Wounded</i>	
Veale, B. T.	Leading Seaman	D/5985D

